

# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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## CHRISTIAN WORKERS WITH YOUTH - a conference and evaluation

Fifty youth workers from four denominations and seven student associations met for three days this month under the auspices of the NCC Department of Youth. Adult leaders with responsibility for evangelism of young people in high schools, colleges and business life all over the nation shared in worship, recreation and study. An indication of some of the main problems of Japanese young people today may be gained from a look at some of the areas of discussion in the three respective groups.

Youth in High Schools are troubled by the practice in some Christian Schools of enforced church attendance and even in some cases pressure on students to become baptized. This may have an adverse effect in the long run since many of these students refuse to even come to a church once they are on their own again. Another difficulty is that students are under such great pressure to prepare for the highly competitive college entrance examinations that they have no time for church and other extra-curricula activities.

College students of the highest caliber are often not attracted to Christianity because of the aparent lack of social concern on the part of the churches. On the other hand, the highly idealistic Christian youth have a tendency to lose their interest in politics when they find no corresponding idealism among the political leaders. Perhaps the greatest problem for this group is that of securing a living during these dependant years. The youth workers asked if the churches should not take more of a responsible share in supporting and making possible the education of Christian youth.







On all of the points, the workers felt the need to present an integrated message of the Gospel which would both touch the students in their immediate needs and problems and point them beyond. This need for integration in turn pointed up the need for a fellowship among youth workers which will produce an integrated message and evangelistic program.

Youth in Business were painfully aware of the difficulty of living as a Christian in the non-Christian secular culture of Japan. Shop workers can't get off to go to church on Sunday; office workers have difficulty in applying the Christian ethic under non-Christian supervisors. In both labor unions and office contacts, the temptation is for Christians to draw together in exclusive fellowship groups instead of penetrating and permeating their difficult environments.

In planning for the next year of work, International and High School Work Camps, the National Christian Youth Week (May 22-29), and an International Youth Worker's Conference (next summer) were discussed. The details will be worked out by the new Committee which will be appointed in April.

Rev. Takeo Katsube, chairman of the NCC Dept. of Youth, said that while this conference revealed the caliber of Christian youth and indicated that the potential field for evangelism among youth is both broad and deep, the Christians who are available as workers with youth are both too few and too poorly prepared. We as adult leaders and workers with youth must rethink our plans and strategies. In any case, he said, the real Leader is always Christ and human leaders can be no more nor less than fingers pointing toward Him.

#### N.C.C. ANNUAL MEETING - new representatives

The new AVACO Center (see JCAN 1/15/55, p.4) will be the location of the 8th annual meeting of the National Christian Council of Japan March 22-24. As this is the year of appointment or re-appointment of representatives from member organizations to the Council, a new Executive Committee will be elected by the one-hundred members.

Two of the main matters of concern will be the report on The Centenary Movement of Christian Work in Japan (1959), and setting the budget for the coming year's work of the N.C.C.

#### STANLEY JONES' EVANGELISTIC MISSION - emphasis on lay evangelism

On February 1, the first day he was in Japan, Dr. Jones met with 600 volunteer lay evangelists. Again on February 4, preaching before 2,400 people (mostly church members) Dr. Jones appealed for a more active participation by lay Christians in the evangelistic outreach of the church.







Pointing out that in the last ten years the membership of the Church in America has increased 10% but the interest in Christianity in Japan has declined, he suggested that part of the reason may be found in the tendency of the Japanese church to leave evangelism in the hands of ministers and missionaries. Recalling the essentially lay-Christian quality of the church of the book of Acts, Dr. Jones asked for a recommitment to the essential work of the Church - the spreading of the Gospel.

#### All Japan CHRISTIAN ASHRAM - "The Working of the Holy Spirit"

For four days this month one hundred people from this title and status conscious nation dropped both titles and family names and used each others personal names as a symbol of their brotherhood under God.

Under the leadership of Dr. Jones, the first Christian Ashram in Japan was held Feb. 7-10. An hour of labor each day, a constant prayer watch in a special room of prayer, talks by the leader, periods of group meditation and sharing led ninety four participants to sign a covenant of dedication to each other and God. "The working of the Holy Spirit" was felt as they thought about "What is Complete Surrender" (the two themes of the Ashram).

Dr. Ebisawa, General Secretary of the NCC, felt that this was a unique experience, quite different from usual conferences or retreats. He said that the participants returned to their communities to work for the Centenary Movement in Japan with a holy fire in their hearts.

#### WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - Friday, February 25

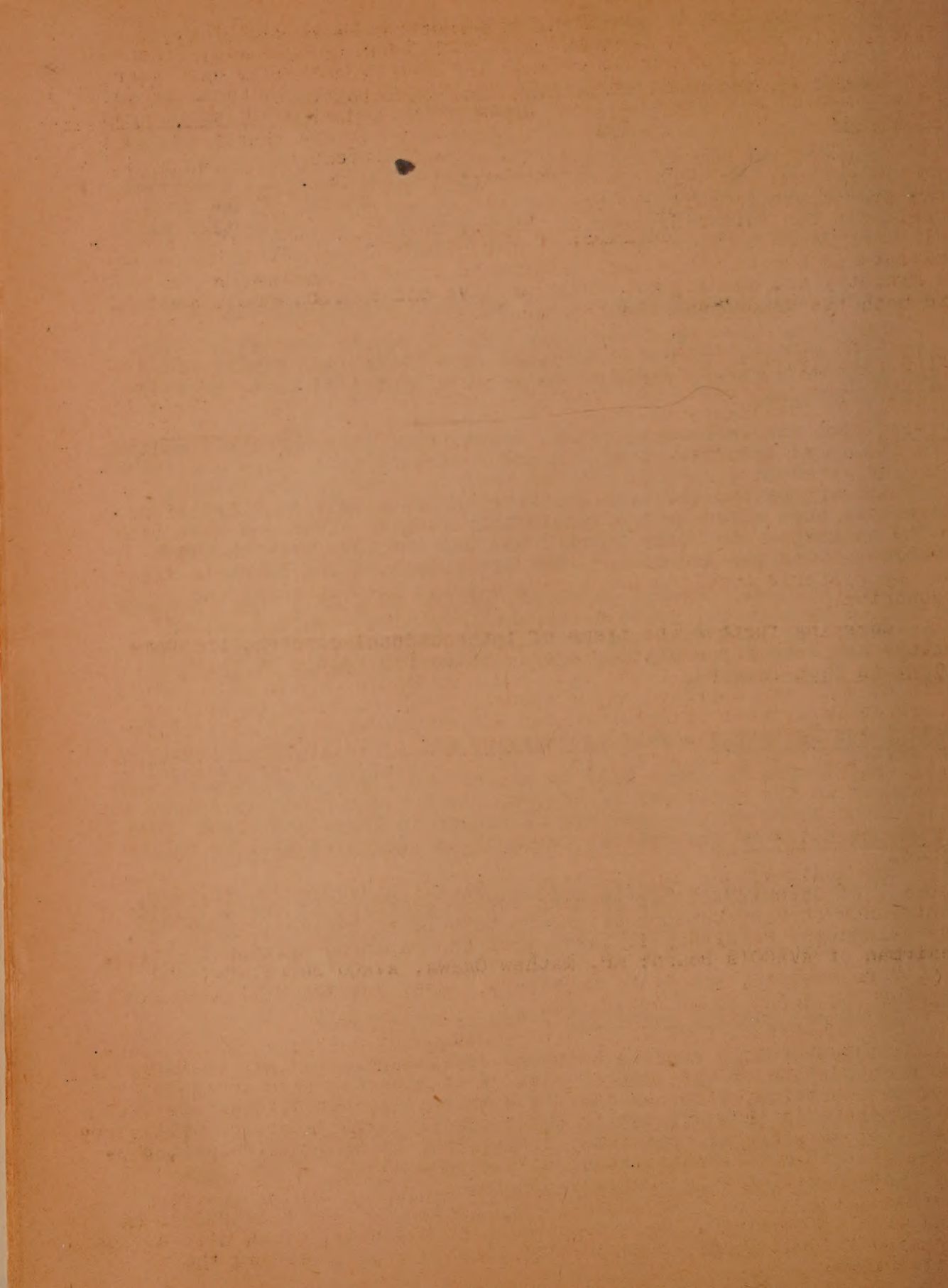
The Church in Japan will be one of the first countries to participate in the world Day of Prayer. As the sun rises on Japan, it will find three united meetings of prayer in Tokyo and other united meetings all over the nation. Some of the services will be bilingual.

Those wishing to obtain copies of the service in English may do so from the NCC Office at 20 yen per copy. Copies in Japanese are 5 yen and a guide folder for leaders may be obtained free of charge. The theme is "Abide in Me" using the passage from John 15:4

#### The CHRISTIAN SERVICE COMMITTEE - "responding love"

"The Church in America has been sending relief goods to Japan as a reflection of the love of God. This love has been accepted and now is being reflected here in a growing spirit of sharing. Japanese Christians are beginning to realize their social responsibility to those in need both in Japan and in other hard pressed areas," said Rev. Kentaro Buma, Associate Director of the Japan International Christian Service Committee.







He pointed out that in addition to the 209 bales of clothing, 20 goats, and 730 cans of vitamins that have been contributed, financed and distributed from abroad through the church here this past year, the church in Japan has carried on relief projects for those in need here in Japan and has even sent goats and rabbits for those in need in Korea.

Last October 80% of the town of Iwanai in Hokkaido was burned to the ground. Fortunately the one small struggling Christian Church was spared and immediately became the center for physical and spiritual help for suffering people. Church groups and Christian schools all over Japan sent 237 packages of clothing and supplies to be administered through this small church to those in need. Through such a ministry the meaning of Christian love and concern was dramatized to both the donors and the recipients.

This winter, thousands of unemployed miners and their families find themselves in complete destitution. As a result of the appeal of the Japan International Christian Service Committee, 19 Christian schools in the Yokohama-Tokyo area channelled some 341 bales of relief clothing, school supplies, and ¥150,000 through the Committee and its local branches in Kyushu and Sendai.

Looking beyond the shores of the Japanese islands, Christians here have been moved by the tragic suffering in Korea and have been moved to gather the money to purchase and ship 31 goats and 33 rabbits. This gesture of love is particularly significant in view of the historic tensions which have existed between these two countries.

Carrying further the theme of international concern, the Committee has been the mediating agency which has helped 75 White Russians flee from Red China and find a haven in Japan. The Committee, with the approval and cooperation of the World Council of Churches Department of Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees, is also investigating means of encouraging and ministering to Japanese emigrants who seek to settle in those countries which are welcoming them now.

#### JAPAN DELEGATES TO ASIA CONFERENCE on mass communications

The Audio-Visual Aids Commission of the National Christian Council of Japan (AVACO) is sending three delegates to the All Asia Conference on Mass Communications to be held at Bangkok, March 2-8. The delegates are Bishop T. Takasa, of the Japanese Episcopal Church, Chairman of AVACO's Board; Mr. Mathew Ogawa, AVACO Secretary; and Rev. Vern Rossman, Associate Secretary. Mrs. Rossman will also accompany the group as an observer.

The Bangkok Conference will be composed of delegations of audio-visual education and radio specialists from various Asiatic countries. The main purposes of the meeting are to examine the productions of various countries, exchange ideas and materials, and discuss how better to cooperate in these fields in the future. AVACO delegates will carry with them sample radio programs, films, film strips, kamishibai, puppets, and other materials produced in Japan.

Mr. Ogawa has been honored by being chosen as one of the five section leaders. He will present the report and lead discussions on "Leadership Training". On his way back to Japan Mr. Ogawa will direct a workshop in Hong Kong, together with leaders from India and the Philippines.



